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ABSTRACT

Improving the quality of teaching should be a fundamental concern of the discipline of speech communication. In studying communicating style in any context or situation (including the classroom), attention needs to be given (1) to the character of the interpretive and behavioral repertoires of individuals; (2) to any socio-historical expectations they bring to interaction; and (3) to understandings which evolve through interaction. Such an approach to the study of communicating style is based upon constructivist assumptions. A constructivist seeks to explain behavior in terms of shared social knowledge and individual communicative development. Constructivist research in communication provides some useful exemplars for gathering and treating data, but no complete methodological model exists for studying communicating style. When the communicating style of a teacher is studied, the style of a unique individual who is also an important agent of socialization is examined. Differences in teacher's styles of communicating should be expected to affect the social and communicative development of their students. Communicating style must be investigated by studying individuals making meaning in specific social contexts. Developing methods for such investigations is a logical next step. (Four notes and 75 references are attached.) (MG)

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Communicating Style: A New Theoretical Approach to Instructional Communication in Higher Education

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> [A] real teacher['s] task [is] to assist pupils to fulfill human nature against all the deforming forces of convention and prejudice....Moreover, there is no real teacher who does not believe in the soul or in a magic that acts on it through speech (Bloom, 1987, p.20).

Whether we view the development as occuring in soul, mind or elsewhere; there can be little doubt that a teacher's speech affects students' development in fundamental ways. Improving the quality of teaching should therefore be a fundamental concern of our discipline, speech communication.

It is being widely claimed that teaching in higher education needs improvement. For example, Hurt (1984) observed that many issues covered in the report of the National Commission of Excellence in Education (1983) "point directly to the importance of....communication in the process of education and....to the consequences of the improper use and understanding of communication in the classroom " (Hurt, 1984, pp. 151-152). Hurt argues that teaching is essentially a communicative act and that teachers are responsible for communicating in ways that maximize students' learning potential. Therefore, the primary responsiblity for students' failure to learn rests with teachers' inadequacies in communication.

In a sense, teaching is communicating (Friedrich, 1978; Hurt, Scott, and McCroskey, 1978), for teaching always involves a process of communicating with students to help those students achieve educational

goals. To study teaching is to study relationships between communication processes and learning outcomes. Applegate (1980) observed, further, that teachers are important agents of socialization and that differences in their orientations to communication could be expected to affect the social and communicative development of their students. Unfortunately, teachers in higher education are typically experts in their content area, well-trained in research, but far less thoroughly trained in instructional communication (Hurt, 1984; Wentzel, 1987).

The president of the Carnagie Foundation, Ernest Boyer recently argued that the emphasis the reward system for professors places upon publication productivity over pedagogical accomplishments (the "publish or perish" syndrome) is at least partially responsible for this situation, which he considers a major problem in contemporary American education. One reason for this dilemma may be that colleges and universities are more confident of their ability to evaluate the research productivity of a faculty member than his or her teaching effectiveness. A review of research literature on research productivity (Fox, 1983) states that academic administrators and committees count publications and, thereafter, citations to evaluate the work of a researcher. While there are probably flaws in this system, it reflects evaluations of research by the academic community to whose knowledge base it has been offered as a contribution. In contrast, confident evaluation of teaching effectiveness awaits the development of clear, accepted criteria.

Many communication scholars have called for research to develop specific criteria by which to evaluate the quality of instructional communication (e.g., Andersen, 1979; Kearney and McCroskey, 1980; Andriate 1982). Some progress has been made toward this goal. For example, Norton found evidence of a relationship between a teacher's effectiveness and that teacher's "communicator style" (Norton, 1977, 1983). More specifically, he found evidence that more effective teachers have communication styles characteristically and predictably different from those of less effective teachers.

While it seems that a teacher's communication style makes an important contribution to the quality of instructional communication, we need a richer understanding of how a teacher's communication style may be described and evaluated. A fundamental limitation of existing approaches is that researchers and, thereafter, teacher evaluators have typically superimposed their criteria for teaching effectiveness and their taxonomies of style upon teachers and their students. Therefore, their investigations and evaluations may have missed meaningful associations and distinctions made by students and teachers interacting in educational contexts.

The proposed research would substitute a constructivist theoretical perspective and research methods consistent with that perspective for existing approaches to the study of teacher communication style. Understanding how meaningful symbols, verbal and nonverbal, are acquired and used is a fundamental goal for constructivist communication

research, which seeks to explain behavior in terms of shared social knowledge and individual communicative development.

Teachers learn to teach, some more effectively than others. This learning is recorded in the cognitive structures and processes available to teachers to encode behavior and is observable in behavior enacted and its success or failure in achieving educational goals. Professionally, teachers play leadership roles in the creation of shared meaning--teaching is rhetorical action (persuasive behavior) for the purpose of creating shared constructs between teachers and students. Under teachers' leadership shared constructs emerge in classrooms and provide bases for interpersonal communication among members of the class.

Communication style research by Norton and associates (See, for example: Andersen, Norton, and Nussbaum, 1981; Norton 1983; Norton and Nussbaum 1980; Nussbaum and Scott, 1979, 1980; Scott and Nussbaum; 1979, 1981; Nussbaum, 1983; and McDonald, 1987.) as well as by Kearney-Knutson and McCroskey (Kearney-Knutson, 1979; Kearney and McCroskey, 1980) use Likert type scales to record assessments of communication style. These approaches to communication style research exhibit certain characteristic limitations. First, acknowlegement of differences in the meaning of behavior for participants in different communication contexts is lacking or limited. Behaviors described by the instrument, drawn from reviews of research, may not be those actually attended to by participants in actual, situated interaction. Some items on these instruments may be perceived by participants as irrelevant to the task

of meaningfully decribing style in specific instructional contexts. Cronkite and Liska (1976) found that respondents considered many of the of items on a speaker credibility measure irrelevant to the task of assessing credibility. Second, the wording of the items on these instruments makes differences in interpretation seem likely. For example, items on these measures often fail to specify which observable behaviors subjects should count in evaluating a teacher as, for example "being shy" or "enjoying a challenge". Substantial individual differences may exist in interpretation of behaviors. Whereas one person could attribute observable behaviors to "shyness", for example, others could attribute them to "aloofness" or "apathy". However, while differences in interpretation are not ruled out; the measurement techniques used preclude discovery of such differences. And Norton's measurement instrument, the Communicator Style Measure (CSM) has been subjected to validity challenges by others with research orientations similar to his own (Buller, 1985; Gudykunst and Lim, 1985; Jablin, 1985; McDonald, 1987; and Tally and Richmond, 1980).

Stephen and Harrison take another approach to communication style research (Stephen, 1985; Harrison, Pistolessi, and Stephen, 1986; Harrison, Stephen, and Pistolessi, 1986; Stephen and Harrison, 1986). They have developed the Communicator Style Q-Set, a deck of 100 cards, used by respondents employing a forced choice sorting procedure to describe the communicating style of a target communicator. From the constructivist perspective adopted for this research, this approach to

measurement has advantages over those described above. First, the CSQS reduces the possibility of differences in interpretation by more often specifying observable behaviors. It also grants respondents a limited opportunity to comment on the relevance of the items because items irrelevant or foreign to the experience or respondents are likely to be placed in central stacks in the sort. However, it also significantly limits the abilty of respondents to describe communication style as they perceive it. While pre-testing of the instrument allowed respondents to suggest additional items for the Q-set, which would allow them more adequately to describe the behavior of a target communicator, it is unclear how these respondents would have freely encoded descriptions of communication style. They might have included other items, considered more or fewer than 100 total items, or shaped their responses in a distribution other than the quasi-normal curve the sorting procedure mandates.

Although it would seem that communication style is important to consider when assessing instructional communication, existing approaches to style research each have characteristic weaknesses. The next steps in style research are ambitious and important. First, theory should be developed that is consistent with the assumption that communicative realities are socially constructed by individuals interactively making meaning. This theory of communication style should be flexible enough to subsume and to guide context-specific style research and to yield findings which contribute to a still more general theory of

communication effects. Second, methods should be developed to give individuals even more freedom to create style descriptions isomorphic with their social perceptions. This paper begins the task of theory development.

Communicating Style: A New Theoretical Framework

> Any specific theory or concept is embedded within a general world theory constituting its assumptive ground (Delia, 1977, p.79).

In approaching the study of speech communication, constructivist researchers seek not only to describe how people behave but also to understand the processes through which people decide how to act. A constructivist approach to style in speech communication, then, would explore how, for individual human beings, cognitive principles interact with communication contexts resulting in observable styles of communicating.

O'Keefe and Delia (1985) explain that, as an approach to communication study, constructivism grows out of symbolic interactionism but modifies the sociological interactionist foci (act-specific and situation-specific processes) by highlighting "individual stabilities in social-cognitive and behavioral aspects of communication" (p.55). This modification is accomplished by integrating the perspective of symbolic interactionists such as Blumer (1969) with Kelly's (1955) theory of personal constructs and aspects of Werner's (1957; Wapner, Kaplan & Cohen, 1973) organismic-developmental theory. Kelly's personal construct theory contributes the idea that "individuals channel social perceptions through stable interpretive schemas" which they bring to interactive situations rather than "constructing every situation from the ground up"

(O'Keefe and Delia, 1985, p. 58). Werner's theory provides a developmental perspective within which interpretive schemas continue to evolve over the course of an individual's life "from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to states of increasing differentiation, articulation, and hierarchic integration" (Werner, 1957, p. 126).

Existing approaches to measurement of communication style use pre-selected dimensions for describing and/or evaluating the behavior of one's self or another. The instruments used to operationalize communication style may not contain some of the dimensions social actors use when they interpret their social experiences and to decide how to act. Rather, these approaches superimpose researchers' constructs upon the personal constructs of individuals communicating with each other.

However, from a constructivist perspective, understanding the way individuals interpret experience is an essential part of understanding their actions. Communicating involves continuous processes of social perception, interpretation, and interaction in the pursuit of goals. Human beings use symbolic codes to create and sustain social meanings through communication. Symbolic codes (e.g., language and nonverbal behavioral codes) come to be controlled by individuals to accomplish goals. A person's behavioral repertoire evolves reciprocally with his or her interpretive schemas (interpretive repertoire). Therefore, understanding how significant symbols are acquired and used is a fundamental goal for constructivist communication scholarship.

When describing continuous processes that lead to outcomes, it is more precise to use the gerund form. Weick (1969) used the gerund "organizing" to describe how people create organizations through

continuous processes. Similarly, the essential dynamism of the highest echelon of Maslow's hierarchy (1970) is effectively communicated through the gerund "self-actualizing." A person is self-actualizing when engaged in a process of striving to become "the best" he or she can be. A third example consistent with this approach is the use of the term "sciencing" to describe scientific activity as "a set of processes" (Rubinstein, Laughlin, and McManus, 1984). Therefore, "style of communicating", or the less unwieldy "communicating style", seems an appropriate label for a construct denoting how a person uses his or her behavioral repertoire in the process of communication. Communicating style will sometimes be abbreviated CS.

Ontological positions taken by Burke (1966) and Gregg (1984) form major building blocks in the foundation of this approach to communicating style. Burke (1966) depicted human beings as symbol making, symbol using, and symbol abusing animals that "build symbolic structures on nature adding art to life" (p.16). Gregg (1984) provides the complementary notion that human beings are set apart from other animals by the innate symbolizing capacity of the human "mind-brain". Based upon these perspectives all human knowledge is symbolic knowledge. Human beings process (interpret) perceptions of reality symbolically and can only know through the symbols they use. All human experiencing is symbolic and social reality is symbolic reality (Gregg, 1984).

Communication is an "emergent creative activity through which social reality is constituted" (O'Keefe and Delia, 1985, p. 48). While it is possible that human minds confront "objective reality" in the process of perceiving, human beings have only human symbolic codes with which to express approximations of reality to themselves or to others.

Our capacity for knowledge is limited only by the capacity of the mind-brain, the limits of which are unknown. Its capacity is unknown because we have no better tool than the mind-brain with which to study it (Gregg, 1984). For all practical purposes, we can only know what we have perceived, processed, and remembered in our lifetimes.

Based on these metatheoretical foundations, my goal will be to advance our understanding of how, for individual human beings, cognitive principles interact with communication contexts, resulting in observable communicating styles. This will involve exploring ways in which individual (cognitive) and social processes influence the ways actors develop and use their behavioral repertoires. Communicating style describes the ways people use their repertoires of symbolic behavior based upon how they have symbolically processed their social experiences, using their interpretive repertoires.

Communicating Style: Theoretical Structure

In this section communicating style is defined by describing its components (the behavioral repertoire and the interpretive repertoire), its functions, its development, and factors affecting its conscious, strategic (rhetorical) use. Because of my interest in instructional communication, examples are generally drawn from educational contexts.

The Behavioral Repertoire

All human behavior is potentially communicative; indeed, all human behavior observed by human beings does communicate. When a human behaves under the observation of another, the observer generates beliefs about the behavior he or she is observing. Observation, as used here, is a term that refers to both the perceptual and interpretive processes which constitute memory. On a practical level, memory consists, at any given

moment, of all cognitive structures and processes available to an individual for generating beliefs about (for construing) events. As such, memory is always involved in transforming events into experience. Experience, which always requires both perception and interpretation (i.e., observation), is a symbolic reconstruction of one's environment and the events within it.

The observation necessary for communication may be either self-observation or observation of another. Individuals monitoring their own behavior stand in a similar relationship to themselves as they stand toward others when observing the behavior of others. In either case, they use available cognitive structures and processes (their interpretive repertoires) to organize and channel their perceptions, to interpret them, and to choose a course of subsequent action. However, not all cognitive processing is at a conscious level. Therefore, not all communicative behavior is strategically enacted; i.e., enacted by an actor consciously aware what he or she is doing and why.

As O'Keefe and Delia (1979) observed, the essential link between cognition and communication is the relationship between social perception and strategic choice. Strategic behavior is always encoded by channeling perceptions through individually and socially consitituted personal construct systems. O'Keefe and Delia (1985) clarify their position by explaining that not all human behavior is strategic in the sense of "being organized by conscious beliefs, intentions and behavioral choices" (p.62). However, they maintain that all human behavior is "action" in that it is always organized by cognitive processes; albeit, sometimes the processes are tacit ones.

An individual's behavioral repertoire (communicative repertoire) consists of all the behaviors and behavioral patterns a person enacts from the infinite behavioral array available to human beings. For the purposes of this preliminary theoretical delineation, a behavioral repertoire will be considered to include four kinds of behavior, as defined below. Behavior catalogued in the first two categories is considered voluntary; behavior in the latter two, involuntary:

1. Strategic
2. Habitual
3. Reflex
4. Accidental

Strategic action, as the term is used by O'Keefe and Delia (1985), is synonymous with "action" as defined by Kenneth Burke (1966). It is behavior chosen and enacted by a human agent (actor) for a specific, consciously selected purpose. For example, The chairperson of an academic department, in order to increase faculty attendance at a student research forum, might announce at a faculty meeting: "I greatly value faculty presence at co-curricular activities involving our majors." In response to that announcement, a junior faculty member might attend the forum and make sure to be seen by the department chairperson. Similarly, a student might, for the purpose of getting a good grade, point out his or her perfect attendance record to a teacher who has emphasized the importance of regular class attendance. As suggested by these examples, communicative action may be verbal or nonverbal. The chairperson's announcement was the verbal enactment of a rhetorical strategy. The other examples involve nonverbal action, strategic

self-exposure to the observation of another for the purposes of fulfilling a goal.

Behavior in the second category, habitual behavior, is often consciously added to a person's behavioral repertoire. However, once acquired, these behaviors and behavioral patterns are used with enough regularity and have enough reward value to become "boilerplate." Habits, as used here, are similar to "routines," described by symbolic interactionists as "recurring joint strategies" that interactants take for granted will be used to handle "recurring situations in ongoing or socially formalized relationships" (O'Keefe and Delia, 1985, p. 51).

An apprehensive or reticent student may initially choose a seat on the periphery of a classroom to avoid interaction and, as the semester progresses, the initial seat choice may become "permanent" without daily reconsideration. In many classrooms, students "claim" seats only becoming aware of their possessiveness if someone else happens to sit in "their" seat. One middle school teacher reported another apparent example of habituated occupation of classroom seats. That particular teacher allowed free seat choice in a school in which many of her colleagues enforced alphabetized seating charts. The "free choice" teacher took attendance on the first day of class and discovered that only three students chose to sit out of alphabetical order! [2]

Habits do not always begin as conscious choice. Imitation not at the level of awareness (tacit imitation) may also be the route of acquisition. Behavior so acquired may become habitual without people becoming aware of what they are doing or why. Students seeing themselves on videotape have been known to exclaim, for example:"I <u>do</u> talk with my hands, just like my mother!"

Reflexes are defined as involuntary responses to nerve impulses. Reflexes are considered unintentional; however, we may attribute meaning to such involuntary behavior. For example, speech communication teachers are familiar with a rash, often startlingly red, which sometimes appears involuntarily on the throat and chest area of a speaker during a stressful presentation. When I see this kind of rash, I tend to think of it as a "tension rash" and to assume that the student is involuntarily demonstrating nervousness.

Accidental behavior is also considered to be outside a person's voluntary control. An accident is behavior out-of-control in the sense that its result is unintended. For example, a particular high school softball player was an accidental switch hitter. Sometimes she batted left-handed; other times, right-handed; but because this player didn't "know her left from her right," her orientation to home plate each time at bat was accidental. However, the player's coach didn't know that the player was unaware of being a switch hitter. The coach assumed, based on this player's high batting average and her impressive record of runs batted in, that her switch hitting was strategic behavior--competent strategic behavior at that. The "truth" finally came to light during a very important and very close game in which the player batted right-handed into a double play (a pop-up and the lead batter thrown out trying to tag-up).

The coach shouted at the disappointed batter, "From now on, I'll tell you whether to bat left-handed or right-handed!"

The player was flabbergasted and was barely able to choke out, "But coach, I <u>always</u> bat left-handed."

The coach did a double take.

As this story demonstrates, the meaning of accidents is socially negotiated. An accident is defined by joint attribution of an unintended outcome by all interested parties, often only after negotiation. The unintended outcome often distracts participants and other observers from the goal for which action was undertaken. For example, if a student were attempting to follow a teacher's directions and refer to a chart in a textbook but, instead, dropped the book on the floor, the disruption would probably be seen as an accident. However, even the attribution of "accident" may not absolve the actor of responsibility if under a social group's understandings (scientific, legal, etc.) the actor should have known the unintended outcome might result. For example, in the case of the fallen textbook, especially if the book hit the floor of a middle school classroom, the following interchange might ensue with the teacher using the power of his or her position to control the negotiations:

Teacher: "Johnny!"

Johnny: "I didn't try to drop my book."

Teacher: "But you should have tried harder <u>not</u> to drop your book. Next time, be more careful."

Not only accidental behavior, but behavior in each of the categories I have defined can be catalogued only through attribution by one's self or others. In observing behavior, we do not discover objective examples of reflex, habit, accident, or strategy; we construe behavior to belong in various categories. Of special significance is the expectation that for any given event, the attribution of some will differ from the attribution of others. Even our categories are likely to differ. When such differences of construal (attribution) are discovered-- as they were in the softball incident described above--

negotiations may be undertaken in an attempt to create shared meaning and facilitate joint action. Thus, such individual differences in construal have given impetus to the creation and evolution of social codes (such as systems of law, team rules, and developmental norms) to organize our interpersonal negotiations--our pursuit of the shared understandings that constitute social knowledge.

A constructivist seeks to explain behavior in terms of shared knowledge (socio-cultural) and the individual interpretive processes in each interactant's cognitive organization of social experiences. We construe the behavior of others and devise our own performances using our behavioral repertoires based on our symbolic reconstructions of the environment and of events.

The Interpretive Repertoire

Communicating style is defined as how an individual uses his or her behavioral repertoire while communicating. Developing a style of communicating involves aquiring and using meaningful codes for interpreting social perceptions as well as for interacting. A person develops and uses his or her behavioral repertoire in conjunction with the development and use of an interpretive repertoire that Kelly (1955) has called a "personal construct system." A personal construct is a conscious or tacit basis used by an individual to compare or contrast objects. A system of personal constructs is developed, reapplied, and altered to organize behavior. It provides bases for decisions about how to act. Together, a person's behavioral and interpretive repertoires subserve the communicative objective of recognizing, creating, sustaining and manipulating shared meaning to coordinate joint action (O'Keefe and Delia, 1985).

Kelly's Approach: The Personal Construct System

The basic postulate of personal construct theory is that "a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which [the person] anticipates events." (Kelly, 1966, p.9). Basic to this position is the idea that life is dynamic; i.e., that processes define life. These (interpretive and behavioral) processes are directed ("channelized") from within a person's mind-brain. A person's behavioral processes express a person's personality and thus, make the person "an event" to others (Kelly, 1966, p. 9). Each individual predicts future events based upon memories of past experiences and develops a construct system for anticipating events.

Each construct in the system has a limited range of application, but the system continues to develop through use. Personal construct theory holds that the most deve'opment occurs in those systems able to recognize novel events when they are encountered (Kelly, 1966). Permeability is the term used to refer to a construct's capacity to be used as a referent for novel events (Kelly, 1966; O'Keefe and Delia, 1979). We exclude from experience novelties with which our constructs cannot deal (Kelly, 1966).

These developmental principles may be illustrated by an anecdote based upon observation of a three-year-old child. It is acknowleged that this is an adult's interpretation of a child's interpretive and behavioral processes. The interpretation is based on the observation that the child has acquired the construct that people may be differentiated by name.

A three-year old child named Annie was observed in actual social interaction in her home. Annie called her mother "Mama", her father

"Dada", her sister "May", and her uncle "Joe." On the day of observation, Joe brought a friend named Annie to visit little Annie's family. Never before had the three-year-old met a person who shared her first name.

When little Annie was introduced to Joe's adult friend, she shook her head. She wouldn't go near her uncle's friend and the woman's verbal attempts to make friends with the child were ignored. Later, however, the child "warmed up" to her uncle's friend and someone asked her "Who is this?" Little Annie replied, "Joe-annie." She had found a way both to retain her own identity and her construct that people may be differentiated by name. Therefore, she no longer had to exclude the newcomer from her experience.

O'Keefe and Delia's Extension: Interpersonal Construct Systems

O'Keefe and Delia (1985) suggest that Kelly's framework can be extended to take into account complex interpretive schemas,[3] sub-systems of personal construct systems, that guide the interpreting and remembering of person-relevant information and the organizing of social situations. These complex schemas constitute an interpersonal construct system (or, more precisely "sub-system"). In part, such sub-systems are results of socialization. For example, socialization encourages individuals within a social group to apply different frames-of-reference (different schemas) to social encounters (e.g., a class meeting, a theatrical performance, a softball game, a date) differentiated from one another in the contexts of socialization. Shared constructs emerge as similar elements in individual construct systems. Such shared constructs provide a basis for interpersonal communication among members of a social group. However, these shared constructs do not fully script

interactive performances. Communicative behavior is organized by both socially and individually constituted constructs. During interaction, situationally emergent understandings develop which alter interactants' interpretive and behavioral repertoires and, in principle, "all aspects of an interaction situation are....subject to negotiation" (Clark and Delia, 1979, p. 192). For example, although their formalized student-teacher relationship may last only a semester, students and teachers sometimes form lasting friendships; while they meet intending only to fulfill a professional contract, actors who play the parts of lovers do get married "in real life"; and although they've been imprisoned to limit their social influence, prisoners have used periods of incarceration to do writing which has had major social impact.

Markus' Extension: Self-schemata

Markus (1977) theorized that conscious attempts to organize, summarize, and explain one's own behavior in a particular domain will result in the formation of personal constructs which she termed "self-schemata." Markus defined self-schemata this way:

> Self-schemta are cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of self-related information contained in the individual's social experiences (p. 63).

In a study of female college students, Markus found that some students had self-schemata for the domain of "independence" or its polar opposite "dependence" while others were aschematic. The subjects so-categorized were tested in a variety of cognitive tasks and their performances were compared. The results indicated that self-schemata

affect information processing in four ways: they make processing faster, ease retrieval of behavioral evidence for domain-relevant statements about the self, provide a confident basis for self-prediction, and make subjects resistant to counter schematic information. Based on Markus' research, an instructional communication researcher familiar with style research by Norton and Kearney-Knutson could hypothesize that more competent teachers have self-schemata for dimensions such as "dramatic" or "flexible."

The Interpretive Repertoire: Synthesis and Summary

Communicating style describes the ways an individual uses his or her behavioral repertoire in social interaction. "Uses" suggests active construction of behavior. People devise courses of action through the reapplication of socially and individually constituted personal construct systems, including but probably not limited to interpersonal constructs and self-schemata. Memory is the part of a person's construct system available, at any given instant, for generating such predictions. Memory limits the distinctions (discriminatory and associative) that people can make while pursuing their goals. We think and act within a social context, but each of us has his or her own interpretive perspective and communicating style.

Functions of Communicating Style

Communicating style has a variety of functions. A person's communicating style exposes that person to social experiences, structures the attention received from others in those experiences, defines social roles and interpersonal relationships and, hence, defines and redefines the self. In any given context and across contexts, CS reflects communicative development and may be used rhetorically (with

conscious strategy) to guide the creation of shared meaning and joint action. In the following sections, each of these functions of CS is described. Examples are generally drawn from educational experiences and classroom situations. However, the usefulness of this approach may not be limited to instructional contexts. When communication is approached as a process of constructing social reality, communicative contexts have much in common. That principle has been demonstrated to me by a recurring dream which, until recently, I construed to be a nightmare. Now, however, I view it as a source of guiding images for my perspective on human communication:

I've seen myself as an actor on a stage with other actors. No one has given me a script; I've learned no lines; but the play is in progress and I must perform. (In this dream, socialization effects are clearly present. I know what a play is and I know the theatrical edict: "The show must go on!")

Other actors seem to know what to say and I hope I seem that way to them and to our audience. However, I notice that I feel more responsibility to the other actors than to the audience. My essential responsibility as a communicator is toward those with whom I'm attempting to make meaning-- without a script.

CS structures exposure and attention

Becker (in Randhawa and Coffman [eds.], 1978) posits "exposure structures" as a part of a model he calls a "communication matrix." An exposure structure is:

> A structure people create through the way in which they expose themselves to and are exposed to the increments of information in their environment; it is

> the pattern in which they sense a set of stimuli. This structure is unique for each individual (p.47).

We learn ways of exposing ourselves to increments of information. At any given time, an individual possesses personal constructs with which he or she generates expectations about the results of actions and interactions. Actual interaction tests these expectations and information about their success or failure is derived. Depending on the degree of discrepancy between the expectations and the results, our personal construct systems are modified to come into more adaptive isomorphism with the environment (Rubinstein, Laughlin, and McManus, 1984).

For example, college teachers may actively seek exposure to students outside of class through behavioral cues such as a leaving open their office doors, posting frequent and lengthy office hours, and distributing their home telephone numbers. Such behaviors would be representative of a communicating style with respect to out-of-class availability. However, under the stress of "publish or perish" syndrome, teachers might alter their behavior to maximize time for research and writing. For example, they might work behind locked office doors with high intensity lights and install telephone answering machines at home.

People not only learn to structure their exposure to experiences but also the attention they receive from others in such experiences. Peoples' communicating styles reflect this learning. For example, research literature suggests that individuals identified as reticent behave in ways that will minimize the attention they receive and the participation required of them in communication situations. Evidence of attention-structuring behavioral patterns is provided by Burgoon and

Koper (1984). In an observational study, Burgoon and Koper coded behaviors of reticent students, and found that, as the level of reticence increased: "subjects nodded less, showed less facial pleasantness and animation, displayed more anxiety and tension, leaned away more and communicated greater disinterest" (p. 601). Burgoon and Koper claim that their study demonstrates that reticent students use "a perceptible communication style [that is] detached, apathetic, and uninvolved" (p.618).

CS defines the self in roles and relationships.

Self-concept has been defined as "that organization of qualities an individual attributes to [himself or herself]" (Kinch, 1963, p. 481). Children acquire self-concepts through social interaction as they relate first to family members and later to peers and other socially significant people (e.g., teachers). In these relationships, children tend to take on the attitude of these others toward them (Mead, 1956). Self-concept develops from global to differentiated as a child grows older and is increasingly aware of himself or herself as a member of groups (Werner, 1957; Yawkey, 1980).

In early childhood, children typically realize that others use meaningful utterances and gestures to achieve goals. Subsequent to this realization, children are helped by their early caretakers to acquire language, meaningful nonverbal codes and "a system of constructs [e.g., name, number, time, size, shape] for segmenting and organizing experience" (O'Keefe and Delia, 1985, p.57). The process of interacting with others activates the process of interacting with one's self (Mead, 1934, reprinted in 1972). The ability to use significant symbols to act toward one's self leads to the development of a self-concept.

Self-concept probably has its beginnings in a scenerio something like this. At some point, an infant makes a connection (without the language to express it): "caretakers come when I cry and they do things that are rewarding. They come because I cry and that matters." Socialization has achieved its first milestone-- the realization that other people matter (Sprigle, 1980). Role-taking, attribution of meaning to the actions of others, has begun. Role-playing follows. Our performances are constructed subsequent to taking the role of a socially perceived other (Delia, 1977). Our behavioral repertoires evolve and are used in roles. Roles imply relationships, participating in interaction processes involving others. In social interaction, a symbol is meaningful (significant) when it arouses in one's self what it arouses in another (Mead, 1956). An infant's cry can be one such symbol.

People use their behavioral repertoires for self-presentation during social interaction. In interaction processes, actors generate strategies both for self-presentation and for altercasting during the negotiation of "situational identities" (O'Keefe and Delia, 1985, p. 52). These strategies depend on reapplication of each person's interpersonal construct system which includes some consciously held but mostly tacit rules about what qualities are relevant to understanding character, actions, and their interrelation (i.e., what behaviors represent underlying qualities) (O'Keefe and Delia, 1985).

Research on communicating style should attempt to understand how personal construct systems are used to create meaning in our roles and relationships. These meanings include the communicative identities of participants, definitions of their relationship, and rules for interactive conduct.

CS Reflects Communicative Development

In any communicative interaction CS reflects an individual's communicative development. Communicative development involves cognitive, linguistic, socio-cultural and behavioral achievements (O'Keefe and Delia, 1985). More specifically, developing competence in communication involves acquiring skill at social perception and interpretation as well as control of behavioral codes (O'Keefe and Delia, 1985). Qualitiative variations in communication performance can be understood in terms of differences in the underlying competencies that individuals have developed (Delia, 1977).

Studies suggest that differences in communicative performances by individuals reflect the qualitative characteristics of the performers' interpretive and behavioral repertoires. The term "development" implies the presence of sets of structures that are evolving and provide the means of organizing interpretation and behavior (O'Keefe and Delia, 1985). In considering the relationships between CS and communicative development, attention needs to be given not only to the character of the interpretive and behavioral repertoires of individuals but also to contextual expectations and emergent understandings about the interpersonal tasks interaction should achieve, the situated goals of communicating. A person's interpretive and behavioral repertoire may be adequately developed for communicative competence in some contexts but not in others. For example, a university student might know how to act at a student-faculty reception but not at a formal dinner at the White House.

Werner's (1957) organismic developmental theory has provided a guiding principle for approaches to the study of communicative development consistent with constructivist assumptions:

> Whenever development occurs, it proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to states of increasing differentiation, articulation, and hierarchic integration (p.126).

Consistent with that principle, cognitive complexity theory and research suggests that small children are typically cognitively simple but with growth and maturity they tend to become more cognitively complex; that is, able to make more distinctions. Similarly, adults encountering novel content will tend initially to be cognitively simple with respect to that domain but will become more cognitively complex after relevant social experience (Crockett, 1965). However, within any group of people, neither age nor amount of experience seems to account fully for differing levels of achievement. Such individual differences in achievement are being investigated within the constructivist perspective as developmental differences in the quality of individuals' social perceptions (interpretations) and control over the resources of communication (behavioral codes). There is growing evidence that, for reasons we little understand, even individuals of the same age and amount of experience differ with respect to the differentiation, comprehensiveness, hierarchical organization, and permeability of the interpretive repertoires which organize their behavior. Instructional communication research should try to understand how such differences develop so that teachers, including those who educate other teachers,

can use that information to encourage the development of all their students.

CS is affected by developmental differences in social perception.

Based upon his research, Crockett (1965) claims that more cognitively complex individuals are less likely to stereotype others, more likely to see others as having both positive and negative qualities and better able to reconcile discrepant perceptions relating to a particular person. He argues that these differences reflect the broader network of understandings cognitively complex individuals bring to the task of person perception. Other research suggests that interpersonal construct development plays a central role in the perception of communicative objectives and obstacles as well as in the use of communicative strategies to organize one's behavior in communication situations. The relationship between interpersonal observation and communication has been most often studied through assessing the role of perspective taking ability in making listener adapted message choices (Delia and Clark, 1977; Delia and O'Keefe, 1979; O'Keefe and Delia, 1979; Ritter, 1979).

CS is affected by individuals' strategic (rhetorical) control over behavioral codes.

Rhetorical activity may be defined broadly enough to include any symbolic activity which invites, lures, or guides people's actions (Gregg, 1984). Communicating style functions rhetorically when it is used to "attract and induce response from other [people]" (Gregg, 1984, p. 136). Thus, in the rhetorical sense, a person uses his or her behavioral repertoire in attempts to bring about desired communication outcomes. Communication strategies (intrapersonal) and behaviors

(interpersonal) constitute a communicating style used to guide the creation of joint action and shared meaning.

Useful insights into the rhetorical function of communicating style may be found in research literature on persuasive communications. The process of persuasion has been defined as "how people change other people's minds" (Petty, Ostrom, and Brock, 1981). For those interested particularly in a study of teaching, that definition is intriguing. It suggests that teaching is inherently persuasive and that studies of source characteristics in persuasion may shed light on teaching effectiveness.

For example, Hass (1981) delineates a three element model of the effects of (recipient-perceived) source characteristics on cognitive responses in persuasion. He suggests that source credibility leads to the response of internalization; attractiveness, to identification; and power, to compliance. Internalization is adopting a belief as one's own. Identification is pursuing a gratifying role relationship with the source. Compliance, is public adoption of the position advocated by the source without private acceptance. The cognitive responses described by Hass can be used to understand the development of the communicating style of professionals, including college teachers. For example, it may be found that teachers have internalized attitudes they perceived in their mentors. (Nussbaum and associates are currently pursuing lines of research that seek links between teachers' histories and their professional communication styles.[4])

If teaching results in learning, the student accepts the teacher's experience (view of the world) as true -- or, at least, useful. The classroom teacher's essential professional role is to guide the creation

of shared meaning. The college or university teacher is in the role of rhetor; for, as O'Keefe and Delia (1985) point out:

> Free and responsible agents are not to be controlled. Rather, they act on the basis of their own automous beliefs. Hence, control or regulation must be accomplished by persuasion...., by leading the other to see the implications of his or her action so he or she will be led to "choose" to act responsibly (p.72).

Studies on the ways rhetors use persuasive strategies, should, therefore, shed light on dynamics operating in classroom contexts. However, very little research has been devoted to the study of rhetorical uses of communicating style and few of these have examined the persuasive use of paralinguistic and nonverbal behavior.

Research reviewed by O'Keefe amd Delia (1985) does suggest that interpersonal construct system development plays a central role in the perception of communication-relevant objectives and obstacles and in the use of communicative strategies. For example, individual differences in developing verbal persuasive messages have been related to the individual's degree of construct differentiation (O'Keefe and Shepherd, 1983) and to differences in rhetorical goals (Kline, 1981; 1982; 1983).

Other research, following Bernstein (1974), has explored relationships between socialization and individual tendencies to use compliance-gaining (position-centered) or internalization-inducing (person-centered) strategies. For example, in studies of parents (Delia, Kline, and Burleson, 1979), teachers (Applegate, 1980), and nurses (Kasch, 1983) research results suggest that the symbol systems used in

specific contexts of socialization shape individuals' tendencies to view situations as warranting compliance strategies or internalization strategies; i.e., to use positional power or persuasion.

Another model, the Rhetorical Sensitivity Model, proposes categorizing rhetors as self-oriented (noble selves), other-oriented (rhetorical reflectors) or situation-oriented (rhetorically sensitive). Noble selves are described as rhetors who see any variation from personal behavioral norms as hypocritical. Rhetorical reflectors "have no self to call their own" but present a different self in each relationship and situation (Hart, Carlson and Eadie, 1980, pp. 2-3). Rhetorically sensitive persons are those who "willingly characterize themselves" as "... undulating, fluctuating..., always guessing, [and] continually weighing [potential communicative decisions] (Hart, Carlson, and Eadie, 1980, p.1).

To categorize rhetors according to this model, the RHETSEN Scale was developed. That instrument, containing 40 differentially weighted Likert-type scales, is used to uncover differences in how people think about the messages they give others. Classifications of individuals accomplished by the use of the RHETSEN scale have been significantly, positively related to independent classifications by professional and non-professional observers. However, it is unclear from reports of this research what the interrelationships might be among attitudes expressed, messages encoded, and specific observable behaviors used to deliver those messages in actual rhetorical situations.

As indicated earlier, studies of nonverbal aspects of the communicating styles of rhetors are rare. However, Chaiken (1979) explored relationships between persuasiveness and physical

attractiveness in genuine interactive encounters. In her study, physical attractiveness was assumed to be perceived visually and the relative attractiveness of persuaders was judged using silent videotapes and black and white still photographs.

Chaiken (1979) found that attractive sources may possess behavioral styles that facilitate internalized attitude change in addition to attitude changes they may produce by identification processes . Specifically, more attractive persuaders were found to possess greater communication skill, higher educational accomplishments, and more self-assurance than their less attractive counterparts. The results of this study are somewhat difficult to interpret because attractiveness was judged by independent raters, not the actual recipients of the rhetors' persuasive messages. We do not know whether or not the rhetors judged more attractive by the raters were attractive to the recipients of their persuasive messages. Still, this study is interesting because it explores interrelationships among physical features, behavioral style, and persuasion.

There is clearly a need for more research into the strategic (rhetorical) uses of communicating style. In particular, there is a need for additional studies concerning aspects of physical appearance and nonverbal behavior which contribute to the successful enactment of persuasive strategies, alone or in conjunction with verbal behavior.

Summary of Theoretical Structure

Communicating Style (CS) has been defined and its functions described. Research guided by this theory could deal with a variety of topics, including but not necessarily limited to:

1. Actions undertaken to structure attention and

exposure.

2. Negotiations concerning roles, identities, and relational meanings.

3. Behavioral reflections of communicative development.

4. Strategic uses of communicating style.

This approach to the study of communicating style is based upon constructivist assumptions. A constructivist seeks to explain behavior in terms of shared social knowledge and individual communicative development. Human beings always think and act within a social context but each person develops and uses his or her own interpretive and behavioral repertoire for acting and interacting.

Peoples' communicating styles are observable in where they go for social interaction, how they act to avoid or to attract the attention of others in those social contexts, and in the behaviors and behavioral patterns they use in constructing their situational identities. In any specific context, role, or relationship; how people communicate is related to the extent to which individual actors have developed skill in social perception and effective strategic control over relevant behavioral codes.

Communication is always situated and communicating style needs to be observed in context. In studying communicating style in any context or situation, attention needs to be given (1) to the character of the interpretive and behavioral repertoires of individuals, (2) to any socio-historical expectations they bring to interaction, and (3) to understandings which evolve through interaction (e.g., understandings about interactive roles, relationships, and goals that are appropriate to that context or situation). For example, when studying the

communicating styles of individuals interacting in instructional environments, such as college or university classrooms, we need to consider the underlying communicative competencies of the individual actors (students and teachers), the shared and differing expectations they bring to class with them, and their on-going negotiation of situation-specific roles, relationships, and identities.

When we study the communicating style of a teacher, we study the style of a unique individual who is also an important agent of socialization. Differences in teachers' styles of communicating should be expected to affect the social and communicative development of their students.

It seems reasonable to expect that how a teacher communicates with his or her students makes a very important contribution to the quality of instruction in that classroom. However, existing methods of studying communication style are inappropriate for studying communicating style as defined here. Methods are needed which give individuals interacting within the social contexts and situations under study freedom to create behavioral descriptions and evaluations isomorphic with their social perceptions.

Constructivist research in communication provides some useful exemplars for gathering and treating data but no complete methodological model exists for studying communicating style. Communicating style must be investigated by studying individuals making meaning in specific social contexts. Developing methods for such investigations is a logical next step.

Notes

1. Ernest Boyer, speaking at Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont, January, 1987.

2. Personal (teachers' room) communication.

3. Two different plurals of "schema" are found in the literature, "schemas" and "schemata." In this paper, each researcher's own choice is used when reporting his or her work.

4. This line of research in progress was discussed at the annual convention of the International Communication Association in Montreal, Canada, May, 1987.

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